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ABSTRACT

This "Indicator of the Month" presents data on early literacy experiences in the homes of American children. In addition to data tables, key findings are summarized in the text. Key findings are: (1) in 1996, more than 80 percent of children ages 3-5 were read to three or more times or told a story in the past week by a parent or family member, while 38 percent had visited a library in the past month, and the percentage of children who were read to or told a story increased between 1991 and 1996; (2) children ages 3-5 who were not enrolled in preprimary education were just as likely to have been told a story in the past week by a parent or family member as their peers enrolled in kindergarten, but they were less likely to have been read to three or more times in the past week or to have visited a library in the past month; (3) white children ages 3-5 were more likely to have received these early literacy experiences than black or Hispanic children; (4) children whose parents had at least a bachelor's degree were more likely to have been read to or to have visited a library than children whose parents had only a high school diploma or GED. (EV)

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INDICATOR MONTH

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS

Early literacy experiences in the home

December 1998

Family participation in literacy activities provides valuable developmental experiences for young children. In addition to developing an interest in reading, children who are read to, told stories, and visit the library may start school better prepared to learn. Engaging young children in literacy activities at home also enables parents and other family members to become active participants in their children's education at an early age.

- In 1996, more than 80 percent of children ages 3–5 were read to three or more times or told a story in the past week by a parent or family member, while 38 percent had visited a library in the past month. The percentage of children who were read to or told a story increased between 1991 and 1996.
- Children ages 3–5 who were not enrolled in preprimary education were just as likely to have been told a story by a parent or family member in the past week as their peers who were enrolled in kindergarten in 1996. However, children ages 3–5 who were not enrolled in preprimary education were less likely to have been read to three or more times in the past week or to have visited a library in the past month than children who were enrolled in kindergarten.
- White children ages 3–5 were more likely to have been read to three or more times in the past week than their black or Hispanic counterparts in 1996. Additionally, white children were more likely to have visited a library in the past month than their black and Hispanic peers.
- In 1996, children ages 3–5 whose parents' highest education level was a bachelor's degree or higher were more likely to have been read to at least three times in the past week or to have visited a library in the past month than children whose parents' highest education level was a high school diploma or GED.

Percentage of children ages 3–5 who participated in various literacy activities with a parent or family member, by selected characteristics: 1991, 1995, and 1996

	Read to three or more times in the past week			Told a story at least once in the past week			Visited a library in the past month		
Selected characteristics	1991	1995	1996	1991	1995	1996	1991	1995	1996
Total	**71.4**	**83.1**	**82.9**	**72.0**	**81.4**	**82.0**	**36.6**	**41.2**	**38.2**
School enrollment status and level									
Not enrolled	68.8	81.5	80.0	72.3	80.3	80.0	30.5	32.0	31.5
Center-based programs*	75.7	85.8	85.2	74.1	82.7	84.0	41.0	46.3	42.6
Kindergarten	71.1	81.3	83.8	68.8	81.0	81.9	41.7	47.3	42.1
Race/ethnicity									
White	77.7	89.0	88.9	73.8	83.9	83.9	40.7	45.1	42.5
Black	59.0	73.7	75.9	66.0	74.4	76.6	27.8	34.1	34.1
Hispanic	53.0	61.5	65.3	68.4	75.1	79.3	24.5	28.0	25.9
Parents' highest education level									
Less than high school diploma	53.6	64.4	58.8	67.4	71.9	72.8	18.3	18.3	19.4
High school diploma or GED	63.5	77.9	77.4	68.2	77.6	79.9	26.0	31.5	30.1
Some college/vocational/technical	74.0	85.3	86.5	74.2	82.9	84.6	38.5	40.9	37.1
Bachelor's degree	82.1	89.7	90.9	74.7	85.0	83.2	52.0	53.5	51.9
Graduate/professional school	88.3	94.0	96.1	78.4	88.2	85.8	59.1	62.8	59.5

* Center-based programs include Head Start, nursery school, and prekindergarten.

NOTE: This analysis includes children ages 3–5 who were not enrolled in first grade. Included in the total but not shown separately are children from other racial/ethnic groups.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1991 (Early Childhood Education File), 1995 (Early Childhood Program Participation File), and 1996 (Parent and Family Involvement in Education File).

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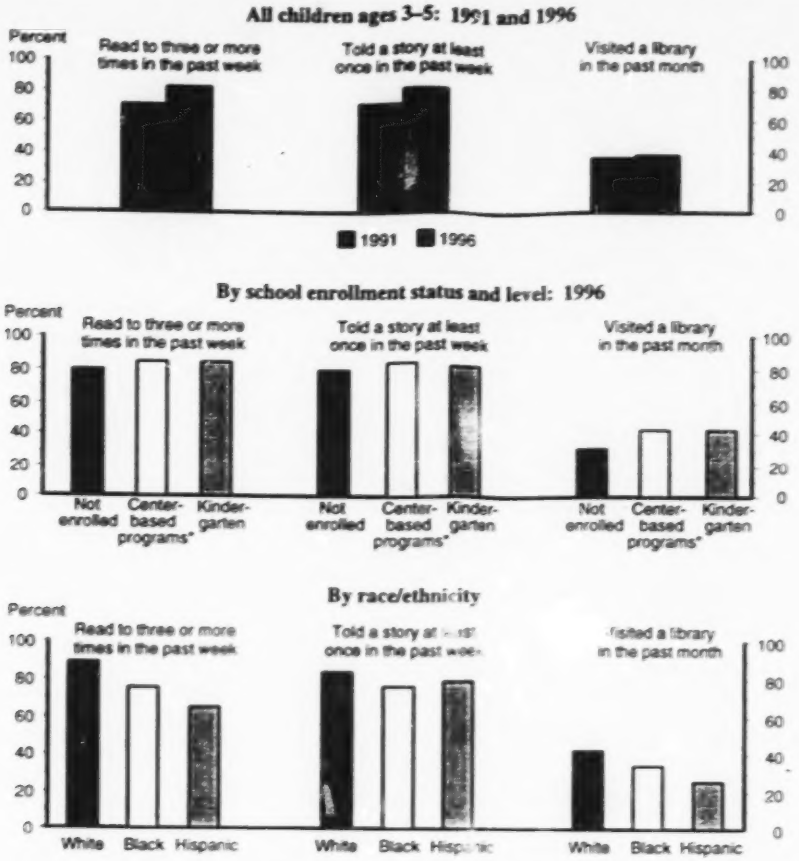

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NOTE: This analysis includes children ages 3–5 who were not enrolled in first grade.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Household Education Survey (NHES), 1991 (Early Childhood Education File) and 1996 (Parent and Family Involvement in Education File).

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